

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /065 R

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NEA/P:WHARRIS
-----129761 251203Z /14
R 242214Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, PK, US

SUBJECT:HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN - PRESS BRIEFING

1. THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE AT THE NOON PRESS
BRIEFING ON MARCH 23:

Q: YOUR COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS SAYS THAT IN
PAKISTAN THE MILITARY REGIME OF GENERAL ZIA-UL-HAQ HAS
MADE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.
NOW SINCE THE ZIA REGIME WAS REPORTED THIS MORNING AS
CONDUCTING PUBLIC HANGINGS, AS WELL AS ANNOUNCING THEIR
INTENTION TO CUT OFF THE HANDS OF THIEVES; AND SINCE THEY
HAVE CLOSED DOWN A LEADING PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER -- I WAS
WONDERING IF THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS A STRONG STATEMENT
ON THIS SUPPRESSION OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AS IT
DID ALMOST INSTANTLY WHEN THE VOERSTER GOVERNMENT CLOSED
DOWN A BLACK NEWSPAPER IN JOHANNESBURG.

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A: NO, I DON'T HAVE ANY KIND OF A STATEMENT, STRONG OR
OTHERWISE.

Q: DOES THE SECRETARY BELIEVE THAT THE PRESS FREEDOM
FOR PAKISTANIS IS, FOR SOME REASON, LESS IMPORTANT THAN
PRESS FREEDOM FOR THE BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

A: NO

Q: WELL THEN, WHY ISN'T THERE A STATEMENT INSTANTLY ON THIS CLOSING DOWN OF A HUGE NEWSPAPER IN PAKISTAN, COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT? I REMEMBER ALMOST INSTANTLY AFTER THE WORLD WAS CLOSED IN AND KABOTIA WAS BANNED -- IT WAS IMMEDIATELY PROTESTED FROM THIS PODIUM. AND WELL, GOOD. NOW THE QUESTION IS: WHY NOT WHEN A PAKISTANI PAPER IS CLOSED? THEY ARE HANGING PEOPLE AND WANTING TO CUT OFF PEOPLE'S HANDS.

A: YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE AN EXACT PARALLEL BETWEEN SITUATIONS THAT ARE NOT EXACTLY PARALLEL. THAT WOULD BE ONE ANSWER. THE OTHER ANSWER WOULD BE THAT I AM NOT EXCLUDING THAT AND WE WILL MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT THAT AT SOME POINT.

Q: TELL ME THIS, JOHN. WHY DO YOU SAY THAT IT'S NOT EXACTLY PARALLEL? DO YOU MEAN IT'S BECAUSE PAKISTAN IS SOME DISTANCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA? THIS IS THE SUPPRESSION OF A NEWSPAPER. THEY WERE BOTH NEWSPAPERS OF FAIRLY WIDE CIRCULATION. WHY IS IT NOT ---

A: WELL, I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS OF THE CLOSING OF THE

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PAPER YOU MENTIONED. I HAVE NOT SEEN ANY REPORTS OF THAT. SO THAT WOULD BE ONE REASON I WOULD STATE THAT I DON'T SEE AN EXACT PARALLEL. WE DID KNOW THE DETAILS FAIRLY QUICKLY IN THE OTHER SITUATION.

Q: RIGHT. IS IT POSSIBLE YOU COULD TAKE THIS? I MEAN IS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS?

A: YES, I WILL HAVE TO LOOK INTO IT. I AM NOT AWARE OF THE SITUATION, AS I SAID.

Q: JOHN, I SEE BY THE SCHEDULE THAT THE SECRETARY IS SEEING A MR. SHAHI, WHO IS AN AIDE OF GENERAL ZIA. IS THIS WITH THE ALI BHUTTO CASE?

A: NO, THIS IS NOT RELATED TO THE ALI BHUTTO CASE.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT CASE AT ALL?

A: NO, NOTHING OTHER THAN THAT. IT'S A CALL, I THINK, TO DISCUSS OTHER ASPECTS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND

THE PAKISTANIS, BUT IT IS NOT RELATED TO THAT CASE.

2. THE FOLLOWING ANSWER TO QUERY WAS POSTED ON MARCH 24:

Q: WHAT COMMENT DO YOU HAVE ON THE PUBLIC EXECUTIONS
IN PAKISTAN AND THE CLOSING OF A PAKISTANI NEWSPAPER?

A: -- WE WOULD NOTE THAT THOSE EXECUTED WERE CONVICTED
OF THE CRIME OF RAPE, OUR INFORMATION INDICATES THEY
WERE TRIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS IN FORCE IN
PAKISTAN.

-- WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEWSPAPER HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY
CLOSED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF MARTIAL LAW NOW IN FORCE IN
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PAKISTAN.

-- WE OF COURSE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW EVENTS IN PAKISTAN
CAREFULLY. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE077096
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MKBERRY:SO
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780132-0154
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780326/aaaaavyl.tel
Line Count: 140
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 95b8adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3206851
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN - PRESS BRIEFING
TAGS: SHUM, SOPN, PK, US
To: ISLAMABAD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/95b8adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014